

ScientiFiction

Winter, 1996



The First Fandom Report



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Cover showing, from left to right, Forrest J. Ackerman, Ray Harryhausen, Ray Bradbury, and Julius Schwartz at Archon 20, St. Louis, October, 1997.

Photo courtesy of Member John L. Coker, III, Orlando, Florida

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FIRST FANDOM REUNION AT NAME- THAT-CON 10

DANTE'S CONFERNO

EARTH CITY SITE WINS NOD

Name-That-Con 10, "Dante's Conferno", has been selected as the site of the 1997 First Fandom Reunion and venue of the Hall of Fame award ceremony.

Name-That-Con, the con that changes its name every year, is a pleasant gathering which has met in and around the St. Louis area for the past nine years. It averages an attendance of six hundred and is very well run.

This year it will be held April 4-6, 1997, at the Harley Hotel in Earth City, Missouri. Rooms are \$67 a night for up to four people. The hotel can be contacted at:

Harley Hotel
3400 Rider Trail South
Earth City, MO 63045-1199
314-291-6800

The con's guests are:
Laurell K. Hamilton, author; David Martin, artist; Susan Eisenour, fan; Mickey Zucker-Reichert, tostmistress; Bob Tucker, perpetual.

The con has offered the

following to First Fandom:

1. Free membership for each member and a guest;
2. A separate First Fandom VIP hospitality suite;
3. Admission to the regular VIP suite;
4. The main programming auditorium for up to 2 hours for the awards ceremony;
5. Personal assistance for all members who require same;
6. Free transport from and to airport and train station;
7. Prominent advertising of the Reunion and the award ceremony;
8. Special reserved seating at the masquerade and any other functions members may wish to attend.

In addition, members of First Fandom are invited to be auctioneers at the art auction, the charity auction, or both, and to be part of the panel of judges for the masquerade.

Additional information can be obtained from:

Name-That-Con
c/o SCSFFS
P.O. Box 575
St. Charles, MO 63302
namethatcon@juno.com

APPLICATIONS

The following have applied for associate membership:

Robert Beerbohm
Arthur H. Rapp
Joel Zakem

NEW MEMBERS

The following has been made a Founding Member:

Shirley E. Davidson
3842 Marseille Road
Indianapolis, IN 46226

The following has been made an Associate Member:

Frank. C. Johnson
4315 Mt. Alverno Road
Cincinnati, OH 45238

Welcome Dinosaurs!

SUSTAINING PATRONS

We have new sustaining patrons, to wit:

John Novak
Charlotte Phelps
Kathy Wolff
Michelle Zellich

Welcome aboard!

KORSHAK ACCEPTS HoF AWARD

(The following is the text of Erle Melvin Korshak's acceptance speech at the 56th World Science-Fiction Convention in Anaheim, California)

Thank you Marjii. Good evening, fellow science-fiction fans. I will try to follow the excellent advice that a university professor once gave me as a prospective commencement speaker: "Think of yourself as the body at an Irish wake," he said. "They need you in order to have the party, but nobody expects you to say very much."

In the short time allotted to me to accept this Hall of Fame Award, I should like to thank -- for different reasons -- the other two members of the triumvirate who, along with myself, were the people most responsible for putting on in 1940 -- (56 years ago) -- Chicon I, the 2nd World Science-Fiction Convention. First, Bob Tucker who, praise the Lord, is with us yet, for having nominated me for this honor. Second, Mark Reinsberg, the Chairman of Chicon I, for were it not for this man very likely we would none of us be here in convention assembled this day. For it was Mark Reinsberg who, in 1939 at the close of the 1st World Science-Fiction convention came up with an idea as simple -- once somebody invented it -- as the wheel or the paper clip: "Let's have

these world conventions annually," said Mark. And he set the wheels in motion for us to do just that. We, all of us, owe this one man a debt that has never been repaid. He has truly been an eagle forgotten.

In conclusion, I should like to borrow the accepting comment made by Charlie Hornig in Boston a few years ago when he accepted his First Fandom Hall of Fame Award: "Thank you," said Charlie, "I'm so glad that this award wasn't made posthumously."

DEADLINES

The deadlines for First Fandom events and StF are as follows:

First Fandom:

December 31, 1996 -- last date for HoF balloting.

April 4-6, 1997 -- First Fandom Reunion and presentation of Hall of Fame awards, Name-That-Con X: Inferno, Earth City (St. Louis), Missouri.

May 31, 1997 -- last date for nominations for 1998 Hall of Fame award.

SciFiction:

January 18, 1997 -- Closing date for Spring, 1997 ish.

April 19, 1997 -- Closing date for Summer, 1997 ish.

July 19, 1997 -- Closing date for Autumn, 1997 ish.

October 18, 1997 -- Closing date for Winter, 1997 ish.

NECROLOGY

R.D., Swisher

DUES

Dues in First Fandom remain \$5.00 per year. The number on your mailing label will tell you to the end of which year your dues are paid. Please keep your dues current if you possibly can.

PARTY REPORT '96

OR

ARTHUR C. CLARKE CALLED MY ROOM!

by

Marjii Ellers

David A. Kyle placed news of First Fandom's party in STAT, L.A.con's very frequent zine. Thanks to these items addressed to Dinosaurs in issues 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9, almost all the First Fans at the con were able to find the party/meeting, as Don Franson called it.

Friday evening after the Retro Hugo awards Room 11509 was full of First Fans honoring the two recipients of the Hall of Fame award, Erle Melvin Korshak and Frank K. Kelly. Erle, who knew everyone, introduced Frank, who had never met a fan before, but who had heard of a few. He was delighted to shake the hands of Forrest J. Ackerman, Walt Daugherty, Kelly Freas, Dave Kyle, Roy Lavender, Art Widner, Jay Kay Klein, Julie Schwartz, Fred Prophet, Bob Peterson, Don Franson, Jack Speer, Roger Sims, David Blair, Franz Grumme, and Sue Miller.

Erle brought Cynthia Gable, the photographer responsible for his portrait in the souvenir book, and

his son, Stanton Korshak. Frank brought Christine Boesch, who persuaded him to come to the con in spite of his heart condition, and her son Sean. Laura Brodian-Freas accompanied Kelly, and Pat Sims, of course, came with Roger. Keith Miller was there with his mother Sue. Howard and Denise Kent, George E. Harris and Robert Harris all signed Dave's guest list.

A few minutes after nine the call First Fandom had been waiting for came in. Dave Kyle had arranged for Arthur C. Clarke to call the gathering of his fans at the party.

"Is there anyone here I know?" Of course there was, and he was inundated with greetings. He mentioned Supernova, the Russian science fiction magazine, now in its fourteenth issue, and that he was going to Beijing on October 8th to receive the Von Karman award from one of Von Karman's pupils, Mr. Hsue-Shen Tsien of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Jack Speer innocently asked Clarke why he was called "Ego?" There was a pause. "I can't think why!" a surprised voice complained, but went on with cheerful good humor to confide he would answer that in the autobiography he was working on now. One suggested title: "Modest Genius"; another: "I Was A Teen-Age Centenarian."

In closing his audio visit, he bade all fans "live long and prosper!"

By and large no one left hungry or thirsty, and a good time was had by all. The last guest left reluctantly at 12:06.

ARCHON 20

OR

HOW JOHN COKER STOLE MY LUGGAGE AND LIVED

by

Mark Schulzinger

I suppose everyone has to have one strange con experience, for me it was somewhat more than that. For some reason Archon has that effect on me.

It started when I got off the plane. John Novak was my designated receiver and he was nowhere to be found. This is an event that is guaranteed to make me panic a little, especially when I know that the trip from Lambert Field to Collinsville, Illinois is not a minor undertaking.

I found John by the baggage carousel, along with another fan he was picking up. He told me that yet a third fanne, a handicapped lady, had been missed by him. She had arrived from New Orleans and deplaned at gate 23. I made sure my baggage was safe, and set off to reconnoiter the area.

I assumed my quarry would be easy to find since she was confined to a wheelchair. Either wheelchairs have become so ubiquitous that I don't notice them any more, or else she was artfully disguised as an elderly gentleman. Whatever the reason I was unable to locate her, and gate 23 is less than two city blocks from baggage claim.

I returned to report failure and John Novak set out to look for her. While he was on this errand a message came over the annunciator to the effect that the object of our search could be found at exit 10.

Wrong.

I hurried to exit 10, but found no fanne in a wheelchair either within or without. I searched up and down the hallways, but to no avail. Finally I rounded up the usual suspects and threatened dire consequences to their families who remained in Europe. Silence greeted me. Well, almost silence. There was the odd titter here and there.

By that time the three of us had reached total frustration, so we decided that the whole thing had probably been a hoax; there was no fanne. So we set off for the con in John's auto.

John promptly lost his parking ticket. This necessitated a ten minute search of the car and a ten second search of John. The latter was productive: it was in his

pocket all the time.

Ah, St. Louis! This being October rather than June, the weather was pleasantly cool and damp instead of hot and damp. I could almost enjoy it. John dropped me off at the Fairfield Inn and I waited patiently while the clerk tried to print a receipt, had to learn how to insert paper into the printer, had to learn how to access the central computer via modem, had to figure out she had already printed out a receipt which hadn't printed since she had not yet fed paper into the printer, and finally gave up completely. Then she checked me in. It was close to 1930 hrs. I had eaten at 1100 hours St. Louis time. I had not had a drink in two hours. It was time for mass quantities of food and liquid.

Ray Beam and Mary Lu and Larry Lockhart had checked in but were somewhere else. I assumed they were at supper and hoofed it over to the Holiday Inn restaurant. I was right. They were attacking salads when I slid into a seat at the table, commandeered a roll, and requested a martini. Then I had to specify a *gin* martini (o, tempora!). It arrived without an olive, but the helpful waiter informed me that he had a twist for me if I wanted it. Said waiter was obviously a beer drinker.

Whatever said waiter was, he wasn't a waiter. By the time supper was finished he had managed

to louse up three orders -- I was smart and ordered only a salad -- and made us all wait an unconscionable length of time before presenting the outrageous bill. We used the time we waited to make small talk with Julie Schwartz who was squiring Ray Bradbury and Ray Harryhausen around.

Somehow I had been scheduled for a panel at the same time my plane was landing. Tucker assumed the role of Designated Schulzinger and took over for me. I decided to assist Ray in a panel on movies. It was not pleasant.

The Archonites are a great bunch of folks. They had my badge ready for me, and they were almost deferential to all of the First Fans. We had unlimited access to the VIP suite, unlimited rounds of hugs, smiles and pleasant conversation, and unlimited shuttle service. Apparently they learned from last year that old fans need help, so they rented a shuttle bus that ran continuously from con center to hotel and back again. I never used it, since I like the idea of still being able to walk, but others did and were grateful.

Mary Lu had rented a huckster table; she viewed the con as a potential gold mine for those who wanted same. We took advantage of her. Ray put up some of his serials, and I put out a few copies of *SciEntiFiction* and some of Sally's Pets.

Alas, the fannish version of Gresham's Law struck. The presence of one Bradbury effectively devalues everything else in the area. If what one was selling didn't have Ray's name on it it just didn't sell. If I could mine his toilet I could have retired rich, the throngs would have bought anything.

And they were throngs, a throng of 2,100 to be exact, and the largest attendance of any Archon to date. The autograph line wound around itself thrice and the one hour allotted for collection of Bradbury signatures extended for a further three. Most of us were amazed that Ray was still able to open doors for himself after such an ordeal.

In the midst of all this Julie Schwartz sat down to rest. Paul McCall confronted him and presented Julie with his caricature, a wonderful concoction which depicted Julie standing on a pedestal wearing a Superman costume, while the golden and silver ages Flashes and Green Lanterns cavorted around him. It was a delightful bit of whimsy, and Julie appreciated it -- and then gave Paul detailed instructions as to the exact day of the week and time of day that it could be delivered to his house.

John Coker was there, of course. He took the photos, of course. We started to chat, and he told me he had passed a kidney stone a while back and was in the process of getting rid of a second

one. Ouch. I felt his pain. I also let him know that little things like this were Nature's equivalent of the slave who held the olive wreath over the Roman general's head and chanted "remember, you are mortal" into his ear.

Somewhere in there John Novak told me that the nonexistent fanne had made it to the con. Whether she had been picked up by a friend, or wheelchaired it all they way, or just wandered ethereally through walls and dimensional connections I suppose I shall never know. I do know, though, I never saw her.

I spent time talking with folks. Samuel Maronie, one of our Sustaining Patrons, found me grazing in the VIP suite and shared the experiences of his friend who had a bout with cancer. I met Paul Zimmer who turned out to be Marion Zimmer Bradley's brother. Aside from that he was a pleasant gentleman. We shared outrageous stories about Harlan. John Tibbetts told me his father Jim was undergoing surgical correction for his essential tremors and that the technique just might work.

Somewhere in all of that I slept through one night, lived through one day, and shared an excellent oriental meal with the Beams and Lockharts in Collinsville. I had crispy duck which I offered to share with others. Mary Lu had shrimp. Piggy Mary Lu.

Wes Beam announced that he was kicking butt with "Quake," a new computer game. I wandered down to the gaming rooms to watch. Some enterprising fellow had lugged a mess of computers to the con, LANed them, and was charging from \$4 to \$5 an hour for multi-player gaming. I watched over Wes's shoulder as he kicked butt. The "Quake" engine is impressive, but very similar to the "Doom" engine for which it is the next generation. Computer gaming can be fun, I only wish I had time for it.

Nancy Tucker Shaw was helping Tucker sell copies of his guide. She and I got into a discussion of Bob Shaw's cancer and the duplicitous treatment he got at the hands of American doctors. With that horror story out of the way we shared pet stories and Adventures in Landscaping. Believe me, it was more fun than you might imagine.

I ran into Keith Berdack, an artist friend from my Southwest Missouri days. He told me he was now doing Harley Davidson tee shirts for Real Money. David Lee Anderson came by. He too is making Real Money with his art. Lucy Synk is now living in Forsyth, Missouri and painting murals for natural history museums. The science fiction/fantasy artists are finding that the livings are to be made in the commercial art field, not in the genre field. But then you knew that already didn't you?

Robert Beerbohm, a Sustaining Patron who suddenly discovered he qualified for membership, has been a comic book dealer for over 20 years. We chatted about such matters, and about the industry which seems hell-bent on destroying itself from within. Robert mentioned such things as the Marvel execs who shamelessly took advantage of the collectors and where then overheard boasting about it within earshot of those selfsame collectors. It seems that the comics market is getting smaller almost daily. In between that we discussed matters of Weight and Portent but, since they're the intellectual property of Robert, I won't mention them here.

Somewhere around there I went to bed entirely too late, got up too early, got into a discussion of trigonometry and the stock market with Wes Beam, and discovered that Mary Lu Lockhart's mother in Florida had been rushed to the hospital. We all worked like beavers taking down her display and packing up while Larry tried to find out the best airline connections to make. They were out of Indianapolis. Naturally.

After the Beams and Lockharts scattered in the general direction of Indiana, I wandered up to the VIP suite for lunch and found our newest Sustaining Patron, Kathy Wolff. She's an urban planner in Jacksonville, Florida, and was a con virgin until Saturday nite. We

started to wander around together, a pleasant way to kill four hours I will admit.

I introduced her to Tucker, who bought her one of his books, inscribed it to her, and made her one of his granddaughters. I suggested titles for her to read and showed her Keith Berdack's artwork. After a while we returned to the VIP suite where Forry insisted she sit next to him. His excuse was that she was wearing a "Metropolis" tee shirt, but I warned the Great Man that if he kept it up he would have to marry her.

By then the suite was a bit chaotic. John Coker was keeping company with Ray Bradbury, I was trying to talk Ray Harryhausen into joining First Fandom, and John Tibbetts was taking pictures for folks. Julie Schwartz looked up to find a Sweet Young Thing smiling at him and immediately went into his Superman shtick, showing his big red S and all. Turned out that the SYT was an employee of the hotel who had come up on business. She went away with Julie's autograph.

At 1500 hours Julie and a few others left to catch their flight. I was chatting, remembered I needed something from my bag, and went to get it. It was gone. Disappeared. Not there. Somehow, in all the confusion, the bag containing Sally's Pets, my tickets, my keys, my checkbook, had disappeared.

There was an off chance that it had gone with Julie. I sprinted down the hallway, down four flights of stairs, across a greensward. There was no one at the front door; no car, no Julie, no bag. This was clearly the moment to panic. I saw a van and dashed over to it. It was full of mundanes who must have thought I was mad. Back to the front door. There was Joanie Knappenberger. Julie? He was in the men's room.

And with him was John Coker. And with John Coker was my bag. Someone had told John it was Julie's. I retrieved it. Poor John somehow decided he had done me a terrible wrong and apologized all the way up one side and down the other. It was a simple mistake, and one that had been discovered and corrected. John persisted. Sweet guy. I'll ask for his firstborn later.

Back at the suite with my tickets, my keys, my checkbook, I promised John Tibbetts a ride with John Novak. John Novak maintained he had no room. John Tibbetts began to panic ever so lightly around the edges. When the time came, though, there was plenty of room. Forry had overbooked.

Some other observations about Archon 20: overweight women no longer try to squeeze their excessive adipose tissue into tiny bikini pants and minuscule bras and allow the excess to hang over where it will; naked female derrieres

of the trim variety are now in evidence, but I do wish she possessed of same would shave their "bikini line"; Whozits are less in evidence; I nearly went blind after looking at some land tuna dressed up as Mickey Mouse in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" (imagine large, even gargantuan, with a tiny black foam nose...); Klingons are definitely in, although I would gladly shut them out; very few people schlep their computers with them any more -- I suppose familiarity has at last bred contempt; I no longer wonder what the hucksters sell.

I did make some interesting purchases: Glen Cook's latest book and a painting by Paul McCall. Paul does good illustrator art, and I've always wanted to own one of his pieces. Unlike some other artists his prices seem fair. So I bought his interpretation of the exodus from "Methuselah's Children," it will look nice in my office.

The plane to Albuquerque was packed. The lady next to me had driven from Albuquerque to Kansas City with her daughter only to discover that her husband had been rushed to Presbyterian Hospital when his blood pressure had gone to nothing over zip. She drove to St. Louis to catch an emergency flight home.

I stopped at the phone bank at the Albuquerque airport to call Sally and let her know I'd be home in several hours. She wanted to

know if I had received her message at the hotel: the furnace wasn't working. I had not. I had checked out by then. I suggested she contact the gas company or just shut the gas off until I got home.

I called her again when I got to Grants. The gas company had wanted \$51 to relight a pilot light (remember when it was a service and not a punishment?). She turned the gas off. I got home, turned it on again and got the pilot light relit. The con was over and I was surely back in mundania.

LOOK AT ORION, SEE HIS BELT

by

Katherine MacLean

"Look over there, those stars are called Orion the Hunter," said Dad to me when I was seven.

Looking up, I did not see any Greek hero. I saw a few big stars and around them saw a vast dark pattern of black snakes twisting and looping in front of a light gray sky dotted with millions and billions of tiny stars. Across the rest of the sky wherever the tiny stars were thick enough to make a light background I saw closer dark bands joined like huge foggy fishnet.

"What snakes? What fishnet?" said my Dad. "That's just the sky. We're looking straight out into space. There's nothing up there. That's space. Those three stars are Orion's belt. What do you mean billions of tiny stars? I see about ten stars in Orion. Black lines? You must be seeing the retina pattern on the back of your eyeballs. Veins over the retina are like fishnet. The rods and cones in the back of your eyes make dots you think are stars."

I believed him and lost interest in the fishnet and black ropes and billions of tiny stars I always saw in the sky. In the astronomy text books they showed a few big stars in simple patterns named as legendary animals and said the obvious light band of the Milky Way seemed crowded but the stars were at different distances from each other and only seemed close to each other. Space was basically empty, with gravity the operating force for all condensing and shaping of stars. Science fiction space travel went along with that image.

Now 61 years later I've finally bought *Burnham's Celestial Handbook*, An observers Guide to the Universe beyond the Solar System, In Three Volumes, Dover, 1979, reduced to \$1 a volume.

I took a good look at the constellation Orion. No Greek warrior or neat arrangement of a few bright stars, instead a stormy

turbulence of clouds in space and a dark rope lying in an open loop across the top. Rope? Thinking "rope" I stared at the "Nebula." It turned into a tangle of light and dark ropes. At the edges of the nebula were a scalloping of dark loops over a background of billions of tiny stars.

I flipped pages, staring at photographs with the names of constellations. In almost half the photos "space" was a light background of billions of tiny stars. Most of those faraway stars are lined up on curved strings, like necklaces around dark starless necks. Circular and semicircular formations of anything as massive as stars could be explained by them orbiting a central object of stupendous mass, but nothing shows in the center but darkness. If dark ropes, why not dark mass? Is gravity alone condensing each of these clusters of stars into a circle around a central dark mass? Or are there other unknown major dynamics? Overlaid on the background of stars is that black fishnet, which in some photos has unraveled into mere chaotic loops of black rope crossing each other and sometimes knotting in black knobby lumps.

H₂ is black. It's always a reasonable guess that space produces raw hydrogen to replace the matter eaten by black holes and generate nebulae and new stars. But if the black ropes are streamers of H₂, why is it produced as twisted black ropes? What clash of forces

could produce it in such condensed curved lines? In the atmosphere of Earth, intersections of different temperatures can condense water at the intersection level like floating blankets of fog, like nebulae, with the relative motion of hot and cold air pulling these out in streaks, but these "streaks" remain foggy, and definitely not ropes.

If the ropes are a fog of hydrogen, how do they relate to the nebula clouds in space?

Again home at night I again look up "Nebula" in *Burnham's Celestial Handbook*, I stare at photographs. The dark ropes coil around and through the nebulae and globular clusters, remaining distinctive thin ropes but sometimes lightening up with a line of stars condensing in their center as even as a line of white beads. Sometimes one rope remains totally black, passing in front of the white glow of the nebula but the black line shows it has changed from rope to a string of large black globes like a necklace of jet beads. The black dots are about five times larger than the white dots of stars in other rope lines curving through the nebula. Hmm.

On page 240 the NGC 5188 nebula shows a light nebula in the shape of the head of a delicate alien emerging from dark clouds. The apparent alien head is surrounded by the usual mess of dotted black snakes. The head

seems to be wailing in terror. It is only about nine light years across. Flipping through the A's I pass skies full of black snakes in mixtures of loops and streaks and straight lines, most dotted by lines of small stars (pp. 257-291).

Flipping forward to the C's I am stopped by globular clusters in Canes Venatici, pp. 362-364, each surrounded by fields of fishnet that show up well in strong light. Then some black plates I'd guess are overinked. But, wow, the snakes and stars line up like pencil sketches of fish, squid, flowers, wagon wheels. Something for every imagination.

There is a nebula in Taurus, with bright sweeps of glowing red threads across 165 light years of space. No star has been detected that could illuminate them, and strong radio waves come from that area. And the filaments have been noticed and argued. Wow! They think electrical and magnetic fields have something to do with them. But what?

Back to Volume One. NGC 185 on page 528, a distant galaxy against an almost empty sky, with its distant edges heavily tangled and scalloped with loops of black thread that is the rope seen at a distance, and the edges hairy with curved white lines of stars. On the facing page, 529, Galaxy NGC 147 is clearly surrounded and penetrated by supersized loops of black "rope"

that are themselves made of loops of thinner rope. Inside the nebula they do not waver in direction but lighten to gray, then to lines of stars.

Next plate onward, page 531, shows a fishnet sky around a negligible knot of small stars called Star Cluster NGC 457 in Cassiopeia. This photo of "space" is top to bottom, edge to edge black fish net, with the only stars hanging onto the sides of the black ropes. Same vision in Alpha Centauri, page 548. Space around Alpha Centauri is so crowded with loops it reminds me of one of my favorite un-disprovable theories. Gravity does not pull, space pushes. Matter shields us from the push.

Enough! I open Volume 2, desperate now for some explanation of why and how hydrogen appears in rope shapes. Across the face of the Trifid Nebula are large dark streaks that are uneven in shape, not smoothly ropelike, some seem to have broken up into floating black fragments in sharp edged chunks.

I read the text looking for explanation. At last I find some dark streaks mentioned. Burnham quotes older astronomers who believe the black lines and chunks crossing the Trifid Nebula were "rifts" and "spaces." They used to think it was divided by these "rifts" into three separate nebulae! They must have begun that belief when telescopes were smaller, and images less clear. Why else would astronomers

describe obvious belts and chunks and clouds of dark matter as nothing, "space," "rifts" and "openings?" The gestalt of background and foreground makes us see either birdbaths or two faces, not both at once. Some see only the birdbaths. Perhaps they see stars as the only objects. Perhaps they see the black figures as behind the light figures, a continuous dark background with no shape.

Imagine a caveman hunter lying awake beside a campfire, staring into the sky. He wakes his friends, "The sky is full of black snakes!" Buddies who are instinctively terrified of snakes and want to sleep tell him there is nothing up there but Skyfather and the friendly ghosts of dead hunters. When he keeps pointing and shouting they pound on him until he learns to keep quiet about snakes.

Thus start the traditions of astronomy.

In the new books the photos have color, the nebula fog is usually red and the dark ropes lighten up as they penetrate the nebulae and shine out with embedded strings of tiny new stars in bright blue. And still nobody mentions ropes, necklaces, or snakes.

REVENGE OF THE SCI-FAN

Our Newest Officer

Don Dailey has graciously volunteered to become our membership chairman. He has provided himself with some very staid chartreuse stationary (at his own expense, I might add), and has attacked his new job with gusto.

Thank you Don!

The Dollar Crunch

Well, folks, we're in a bind. Prices are going up, have gone up, and show no signs of coming back down again. The USPS has just raised the price of bulk mail to 25.6¢ a piece, up 3¢ from previously, and we have no idea how much the new sorting rules (yep, they weren't content with the old ZIP code program and instituted something entirely different) will cost us.

We had just managed to get printing costs down to the point where we could put out a larger mag, and then the copy service we used decided to increase the charge for saddle-stapling. We farmed the job out to an independent contractor, but it's still an added

expense.

The cost of paper is no problem. There's a lot of competition in the paper market and prices remain reasonable. I suspect that will continue to be the case as long as we don't go to either newsprint or coated stock.

The net result of this plus the loss of membership is that our bank balance has been declining steadily over the past three years. I estimate that we've been losing roughly \$300 a year.

When you consider that First Fandom publishes five mailings a year, gives out two or more awards, and provides free goodies at Worldcons and First Fandom Reunions, it's amazing that we can lose so little on a dues base of only \$5.00 per member per year.

But that can't go on.

We have to stay solvent. To do so it appears that we'll have to raise dues for the first time since Ray increased them from \$2 to the current amount.

What I'm proposing is a dues increase of \$1.00 to go into effect as of the June, 1997 mailing. This means that dues, and subscriptions to *SciFiFiction* would go up to \$6.00 per year at that time. It does not mean that there would be any retroactive increase in dues: those of you who have paid in

DINOSAUR DROPPINGS

Dear Mark,

Looks like I spoke too soon about my small cell carcinoma having disappeared; all it did was migrate to the brain. Had the MRI brainscan on 19 August, diagnosis on 23 August, and I start radiation on 26 August. Guess I can glow in the dark, too. Eventually I'll die from this monster, but the radiation therapy is supposed to keep me up and about for as long as possible.

Oh well, everyone has to die from something; I just happened to die from this.

Fortunately I don't have to travel as much as you did. The radiation lab is only about a half hour drive from here. And all this treatment has already been paid for three times over. As I understand it, I only have to pay for it once more. Moral: Put not thy trust in governments for they are as crooked as a hound dog's hind leg.

I quite agree with you on what *StF* should be, and I look forward to that 32 page ish you mentioned. As I recall, Art Rapp's old *Spacewarp* used to be something along that line. How nice if you could include some history in each ish of *StF* also. For some of us it's the most interesting part. Lets the

advance wouldn't have to cough up the extra buck until your dues were again payable. It means that initial membership would still be \$5.00 until the date of the increase. It also means that those who cannot afford to pay dues would still have their dues paid by First Fandom as we have done many times in the past.

I'm not married to this idea. From the standpoint of fiscal soundness I feel it would be a Good Thing. Please let me hear from you on this matter. IF YOU DON'T WRITE ME YOUR DUES WILL AUTOMATICALLY GO UP AND YOU WILL BE UNHAPPY! There, I said it as nicely as I can, and I admit to having deficiencies in the area of tact. Let me hear from you so I can get some consensual validation one way or another.

As long as we're in the area of consensual validation, please note that we have had no, that's **NO** negative letters to the suggestion that we change the venue of the Hall of Fame awards from Worldcon to our reunions at various regional cons. We have had positive letters. So be it, you have already seen the results earlier in thish.

younger Sustaining Patrons know what was happening before they came on the scene; also lets retreads like us know what happened during our absence.

Best regards,
Roy R. Wood

{I'm truly sorry to hear of your misfortune, Roy. Hang on as you can. -- Mark}

Dear Mark --

I received *SciFiction* today, read and enjoyed it. I was very moved by Roy R. Wood's courageous letter. To you and Roy I wish good luck.

I may have mentioned before (geriatric garrulity is usually accompanied by memory) that in 1992 I was operated on for prostate cancer. This is, as you know, a slow-growing cancer but I opted for radical prostatectomy. The results have been good in terms of no further appearance, although one must live with effects accompanying it -- possible incontinence and impotence. I was lucky on the former score, a daily problem, less lucky with the latter. I used to tell people, "What the hell, it's just a once a year problem." Well, it really isn't, but I cannot complain.

I can only wish you a solid recovery, Mark. And, accepting the

mature honesty of your response to Roy, I also wish him as long a life as he can have, free of pain and filled with the intelligence he amply shows.

The SF Hall of Fame could scarcely have chosen better for its inaugural four than the illustrious names you list. They bring back fond memories to all dinosaurs and there are many whose names cry aloud for inclusion! To list them would fill this page. In today's world, when there is immeasurably more science fiction being printed and filmed, I wonder how many practitioners are equally beloved!

All best,
Ben Indick

{Ben, the best thing that can happen for cancer detection treatment is for more folks to talk openly about it. Many seem to treat it as a moral disease than as an ill to which flesh is heir. Many complain that the only treatment options are those which were used 50 years ago. This is true, but the sophistication of such options nowadays is truly amazing. -- Mark}

Dear Mark:

Thank you for yet another on-time issue of *SciFiction*.

I was glad to see Forry Ackerman's letter telling how Hugo Gernsback did, finally, get a rocket of his own. He asks who the "they"

who did not give Gernsback a Hugo were. My comment was in response to an article in a previous issue where his requesting one, and being refused, were described.

I enjoyed "Revenge of The Sci-Fan," although I found the bit about the death of print fiction depressing: it may be true. Certainly the mechanism for producing science fiction and getting it to market is in bad shape. Consider Baen Book's problems with 1945, which is not to my own taste but might reasonably have been expected to sell a decent number of copies.

Skipping over the problems caused by bad reviews by people who don't read much, if any, science fiction and who may have had political axes to grind, Baen's problem highlights the difficulties involved in publishers taking large advance orders and allowing stores to return whatever is not purchased for credit. Only one copy in five of the hardback edition was sold.

1945 is something of a special case, but consider that *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, which according to *Locus* has the best record at the newsstand of all the magazines, puts two copies out for every one someone buys. Given how expensive paper has become this is obviously bad economics, and the only way to justify it is the hope of attracting subscribers.

Time was, taking a flyer on a completely unknown author because you liked the first few paragraphs of his book cost a dollar or two or three. Now it's five or six; more if you order from the small presses where unique talents often debut.

We need a new mechanism for delivering writing to readers.

Sincerely,
Catherine Mintz, Sustaining Patron

{I shed no tears for Jim Baen, Catherine. He bases his entire operation on how deftly he can crunch numbers in a spreadsheet program, and has turned down many really good stories on the bases of said crunching. Besides, he knew full well that the I.R.S. wouldn't let him write off returned copies. That, by the way, is one of the factors that is killing printed books. -- Mark}

Dear Mark,

It seems to me that Catherine Mintz didn't read my Hugo article very carefully. Let's go back to page 16 of the WINTER '95 *SciFiction*: "The chairman FLATLY REFUSED, and the arguments waxed hot and heavy. I finally resolved the argument by OFFERING ONE OF MY OWN ASSEMBLED TROPHIES -- FREE OF CHARGE." Perhaps it would have been better if I had chosen the word: GAVE.

I hope that it is understood – Gernsback ACTUALLY did receive a trophy. It came from my own personal stock (leftovers from the 1955 convention in Cleveland). Let it also be understood that I also provided ALL of the 1960 Pittcon trophies.

I may be redundant, but that “gorgeous metallic rocket” that Forrie speaks so highly of, came from my own personal over-stock.

Where else? The Great Magician in the Sky? Everything clear?

Rest Regards,
Ben Jason

Dear Mark,

I'm overwhelmed at the amount of space you gave my I LOVE A MYSTERY project.

There are a couple of errors, or actually contradictions in the differing places information occurs. I, Harmon, did not write a new ILAM serial. These are basically Carlton E. Morse's original scripts. I did do a bit of rewriting here and there, mostly for technical reasons, or maybe to change a reference so dated I thought the current audience could not understand it. I did leave in a reference to “Sitz baths” although the only member of the cast to understand it was Les Tremayne. (It is some sort of health treatment, like bathing in mineral

spring water.)

In some old accounts I did mention Jack Angel would play Reggie, but he suddenly made more demands before signing the final release, and we had to do it over with Frank Bresee as Reggie. Frank had been on the original 1940s ILAM Hollywood series as a young boy, playing newspaper sellers, telegraph delivery boys, that sort of thing. (He also played Little Beaver on “Red Ryder”).

You are right that we did some parts over again at a different studio, mostly for the business about Reggie as explained above. There was only one instance, I believe, where a character is done by more than one actor. I played Cooper in the first two chapters because Jack Lester (“Sky King”) was ill that day. Cooper did not reappear for four episodes, so I thought that people would not notice, and almost no one has. I had the actors there, and had to pay them, so it really was like a live radio broadcast. If somebody did not show up, we still had to “go on the air”. I couldn't afford to pay the actors and send them home. It took us about two weeks to record the basic show.

I played Cooper (first two episodes), the boatman who finds the heroes on the pier, storekeeper McGinnis, henchman Frankie, several unnamed guards, and Archer in the last episode. My wife, Barbara, plays the second frightened girl at the end

of episode 1 and Mrs. McGinnis. Tremayne was Jack and the English thug on the boat. Tony Clay was Doc and the thug who invades the hotel room in episode 2. Jack Lester was both Cooper from episode 7 on, and the German Dr. Thorne. Art Hern was Capt. Frenchie. Kory Seaton played both Linda/Laura and the French girl, Marie.

Elsewhere, in Lee Sapiro's fanzine, “Riverside Quarterly” I paid tribute to Bob Bloch, who I knew quite well years ago. I was reading his latest novel concerning Jack the Ripper just before he died, and I found it as well done as anything he ever wrote (except possibly “Psycho”). I wonder why it is that some writers can continue to write at the top of their form for as long as they live, and others definitely “slow down” as the years pile up. I suppose the same reason some people get senile and others do not. But there must be more to it than that.

All the best,
Jim Harmon

{The sitz bath is still a respectable treatment today. It involves sitting in a warm bath with or without something like epsom salts added to it. The first word is German, and means “sit”. The other older reference you left in was “going to the blanket” which I, living in Amerindian country, enjoyed. -- Mark}

Dear Mark,

Autumn issue arrived today along with a card from Mary Lu Lockhart; enjoyed both.

In point of fact, when it turns cold here the bears come and snuggle up with us! (these bears being smarter than the “average” ones...)

Recently we've heard rumors of a nifty new invention called an oil burner, and we intend to look into it. Sounds kinda far-fetched, but ya never know!

Keep healthy!

Sincerely,
Ron Small

{And just how does this new invention beat wrapping one's self around a nice fat rod of U-235? Sounds a bit chancy to me. -- Mark}

Dear Ray --

My thanks for the inclusion of my letter about taping interviews with First Fandom members. I had responses from Ben Jason and Larry Rothstein, and I have arranged with Eric Davin, a SFOHA member who specializes in telephone interviews, to interview both of them by telephone. The backgrounds they gave me indicate that we will get valuable historical material from them.

I would appreciate your including this reminder to all of the First Fandom Membership: If any of you have recollections of people and events that have made science fiction, write to me and give me the background (and your address and telephone number). I will arrange for you to put your recollections on tape where they will be available to future fans, readers, historians. Copies of the SFOHA Archives have been placed in the libraries of Michigan State University, the University of Kansas, and Eastern New Mexico University, and we have negotiations underway with other institutions that would like to house them -- including the University of Liverpool and the Library of Congress.

This is your opportunity to leave your own Dinosaur Droppings on oral history.

Regards to all,
Lloyd Biggle, Jr.

Dear Mark,

I think the Autumn issue was a fine one. The journal is a great accomplishment.

Just returned from a trip to Morocco. I wasn't expecting much and was greatly surprised to find it grade A in interest. There's a lot of scientifiction in their everyday life.

Best,

George H. Jones, M.D.

{I'm glad you enjoyed your trip. George, but would you mind explaining that last? -- Mark}

Dear Mark:

I got a set of tapes from Jim Harmon. His production of I LOVE A MYSTERY "The Fear That Creeps Like a Cat" was thoroughly enjoyable. The actor who played Frankie shows a lot of promise.

Ray Beam

President's Message

I attended Archon and enjoyed talking with the other First Fandom Members who were there. The panels that I was scheduled to be on were for the most part disasters. The one that I looked forward to on collecting was a complete fiasco. Although I am a collector, the committee overlooked the biggest pack rat of us all who should have been on the panel, Forry Ackerman. They had him scheduled for another panel on the multiple track programming.

We had about three people in the audience who ended up talking about stamp and Franklin Mint Plate collecting. I quietly walked out after about 15 minutes and left Mark alone on the panel.

What are friends for?

I plan on attending Octocon next weekend (October 18, 19, and 20). It is, as usual, a low-key convention with no programming. Lots of food, drink and conversation.

Mark tells me that he has had no letters in opposition to moving the Hall of Fame awards to a regional convention. This surprises me. Maybe others are becoming tired of the large Worldcons that try to cater to all factions of fandom. The nice thing about the regional conventions that host us is the fact that we get free membership at the very least. Considering the cost of membership at a Worldcon these days that is a lot. Mark did tell me that he had one phone call in opposition to the move. Phone calls do not count. We must have a piece of paper stating views and signed. Both Mark and I refuse to take someone's statement from a telephone conversation and print it as gospel only to be told later that is not what was intended.

Some time ago we were burnt by a similar situation. I received a letter from a member that started out "I am sending you a copy of this because Mark probably won't print it." Let me say at this point that there are very few instances that Mark would not print something. He usually is complaining that he does not have enough to fill an issue. In this case I read the letter. I found some

criticism of Mark and myself. That is OK, we wouldn't be doing our jobs if we didn't expect some. But in reading further I found statements involving another member that would only have created hard feelings. I did not see anything productive in this portion of the letter, and, after discussing it with Mark, he agreed. I called the member who had written the letter and explained our feelings about the situation and asked if he would mind that portion being edited out. He indicated that it would be OK. We no sooner published the letter when we were criticized for editing it. We will not put ourselves in that position again.

I am very sad to report that Lynn Hickman is suffering from lung cancer and emphysema. Our best goes out to him, his wife Carolyn and family. He would probably appreciate cards from the members.

I hate to end on such a negative note. Until Next time-----

Ray Beam
President
Phone (317)455-1958

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